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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: ARREST AND DETENTION OF  
TWO NGO LEADERS IN AZERBAIJAN

¶1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the  
July 23 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna:

Begin Text:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental OSCE freedom and  
integral to the democratic process in every democratic  
country. The United States is concerned about the recent  
arrest and detention of Azerbaijani NGO leaders Emin Milli  
and Adnan Hajizade. We note reports that they were beaten  
and then detained pending trial, while their assailants were  
released. We are also concerned  
by credible reports that the police initially denied the  
Messrs. Milli and Hajizade access to their lawyers, and that  
they have yet to receive adequate medical care.

We have raised our concerns with senior officials of the  
Government of Azerbaijan, including law enforcement  
officials, and will continue to do so. We urge the  
Government of Azerbaijan to release Milli and Hajizade  
pending trial. We call on the Government of Azerbaijan to  
ensure that Mr. Milli and Mr. Hajizade are granted proper  
access to legal assistance and medical care. We also ask  
urge that the Government of Azerbaijan exercise due process.

We welcome recent positive steps taken by the Government of  
Azerbaijan this year, such as the release of several  
journalists from prison, and criticism by President Aliyev of  
the use of criminal courts for libel cases.

The United States remains committed to working together with  
the government and people of Azerbaijan to address the many  
challenges that remain to accelerate democratic reforms,  
including on freedom of expression and association, and the  
full range of OSCE commitments, which are integral to the  
democratic process in every State.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.  
CLINTON